641 e 14 7
641.e.14
7

THE USEFULNESS of the STAGE TO RELIGION, AND TO GOVERNMENT:

SHEWING

The ADVANTAGE of the DRAMA in all NATIONS since its first Institution.

WITH

An ACCOUNT of the Rise and Progress of the PLAY-HOUSES that were put Down, and REMARKS on all the DRAMATICK PIECES which have been Published and Played since the late Act of Parliament for Licencing the STAGE, with the REASONS that Occasioned it.

ALSO

A DISTINCTION between the STAGE and the PRESS, and our present Written PLAYS and the DRAMA in its Purity, with REFLECTIONS on the Taste of the Times, as to *Ballad Operas*, *Pantomines*, *Dumb-Shew*, *Tumbling*, *Dancing*, and *Entertainments*.

LONDON:

Printed for, and Sold by THOMAS HARPER at the *Angel* near the *Sun-Tavern* in *Fleet-Street*; and by the Pamphlet-Sellers of *London* and *Westminster*. 1738.

[Price One Shilling.]

457
50

THE PREFACE.

THE *Decay of Dramatick Poetry hath been aſſign'd to the Introducing of* Pantomines, Dumb-Shew, Entertainments, *and* Italian Operas, *inſomuch that the Writers who have a Genius that way, have almoſt abandon'd the Stage with Indignation and Contempt: Tho' I am of Opinion that it is not for that Reaſon only, but is rather owing to the Judgment and Integrity of ſome of the Managers of* Theatres, *who have for many Years paſt made it a Maxim with them to reject every Play that were not introduced to them by* Stars *and* Garters, *and tack'd with an Aſſurance, that the Author is capable to fill or make a Houſe (as 'tis call'd) which is not in the Power or Capacity of one Author in a Hundred who writes a Play, and for this Reaſon many a good Piece hath been rejected at the Theatres, and particularly at one of the Houſes I could mention; for when the Manager was ask'd what Opinion he had of a Dramatick Piece which had been Read to him a few Days before by the Author, gave for Anſwer, that he*

he did not like the Fellow who brought it to him; and that is certainly the ſtanding Mark that our Play Writing Poets muſt abide by: So that I may ſay, if Ingenuity and Rags ſhould once join together, they are likely to be inſeperable for any Aſſiſtance that they may expect from ſuch a one: By which 'tis plain that many of our greateſt Wits have, by Reaſon of the lowneſs of their Fortunes, been incapable of ſhewing their Genius to any Advantage; and however contemptible an Author may appear in the Eyes of theſe Managers, yet I can ſhew that they have been in good Eſteem with much greater Men in former Ages: For Auguſtus Cæſar *as famous for Arts of Peace as his Succeſs in War, renown'd for the wholeſome Laws he Enacted, began to write the Tragedy of* Ajax *tho' he did not finiſh it, but found it was eaſier to make himſelf Emperor of the World, than a good Dramatick Poet.*

And as we cannot expect, for the abovementioned and other Reaſons, to ſee many new Pieces of Drama perform'd on the Stage, yet the Authors have the Liberty *of putting them to the Preſs, and the Public of Reading them when Printed, which* Liberty *I hope will never be taken from us, while we have a* Cheſter—d *in the moſt Auguſt Houſe of* L——ds *to Defend it; And that we may never want one, is the Hearty Prayer of every True* Briton.

THE

THE STAGE

Is Useful to the Advancement of

RELIGION.

RELIGION in General, or Natural Religion, may be consider'd as consisting of two Parts; The Things to be believed, and the Things to be done.

The Things to be believed are, 1. *The Being of a God.* 2. *Providence.* 3. *Immortality of the Soul.* 4. *Future Rewards and Punishments.* The Poet, and particularly the Tragic Poet asserts all these, and these are the very Foundation of his Art; for in the first Place, the *Machines* are the very Life and Soul of Poetry; for the *Machines* would be

abſurd and rediculous without the Belief of a *God*, and particular Providence. For Poetic Juſtice would be a jeſt if it was not an Image of the Divine, and if it did not conſequently ſuppoſe the Being of a God and Providence, it ſuppoſes too the Immortality of the Soul, and future Rewards and Puniſhments. For the Things which in perfect Tragedy bring Men into fatal Calamities are involuntary Faults, that is, Faults occaſioned by great Paſſions. Now this, upon a Suppoſition of a Future State, is very juſt and reaſonable. For ſince Paſſions in their Exceſſes are the Cauſes of moſt of the Diſturbances that happen in this Life, upon a Suppoſition of a Future State, nothing can be more juſt, than that the Power which governs the World, ſhould make ſometimes very ſevere Examples of thoſe who indulge their Paſſions to an Exceſs. Providence ſeems to require this. But then to make involuntary Faults Capital, and to puniſh them with the laſt Puniſhment, would not be conſiſtent with the Goodneſs of God, unleſs there were a Compenſation hereafter.

The ſecond Part of Natural Religion, contains the Things which are to be done; which include, 1. *Our Duty to God.* 2. *Our Duty to our Neighbour.* 3. *Our Duty to Ourſelves.*

And

And all theſe 'tis the Buſineſs of Tragedy to teach; witneſs the Practice of the ancient *Chorus*, as it is comprehended in the following Verſes of *Horace*.

Ille bonis favetque & concilieter Amicis
Et regat iratos, & amat peccare timentes:
Ille Dapes laudet menſæ brevis ille ſalubrem
Juſticiam legeſque & apertis, otia partis:
Ille tegat commiſſa Deoſque preceter et orit
Ut ridiat miſeris abeat fortuna ſuperbis.

From which it appears, that it was the Buſineſs of Tragedy to exhort Men to Piety and the Worſhip of the Gods; to perſuade them to Juſtice, and to incline them to Moderation and Temperance. And it is for the Omiſſion of one of theſe Duties that the Perſons of the Modern Tragedy are ſhewn Unfortunate in their Cataſtrophies.

Thus *Don John* is deſtroyed for his Libertiniſm and his Impiety; *Timon* for his Profuſion and his Intemperance; *Mackbeth* for lawleſs Ambition and Cruelty; *Caſtalio* for his Falſhood to his Brother and Friend; *Jaffier* for his clandeſtine Marriage with the Daughter of his Benefactor; and *Belvidera* for her Diſobedience.

This ſhews by Reaſon and by matter of Fact, that it is the Buſineſs of the Stage to advance Religion, and it is plain from

Hiſtory and from Experience that Religion has flouriſhed with the Stages, and that the *Athenians* and *Romans* who moſt encouraged it, were the moſt Religious People in the World. And perhaps if we would come down to our ſelves, it wou'd be no difficult matter to ſhew that they who frequent our Theatres have more of Natural Religion in them than its declared inveterate Enemies.

And tho' a Dramatic Poet neither can, or ought to teach the Miſteries of the Chriſtian Religion; yet by recommending the Human and the Chriſtian Virtues to the Practice of an Audience, he admirably prepares Men for the Belief of the Miſteries. For this is undeniable, that it is not Reaſon, but Paſſion and Vice that keeps any Man from being a Chriſtian.

The Immorality of the People at this Time, is ſo far from being owing to the Licentiouſneſs of the Stage; that the Licentiouſneſs of the Stage, is rather owing to the Immorality of the People; for neceſſitous Authors are obliged to comply with the prevailing Humour of the Times; and therefore rack their Brains for ſuch Novelty, that they can find no help from former Authors. I commend the preſent *Poet Laureat*, who hath ceas'd his writing Plays, ever ſince the *Ballad Opera's* came into Vogue; tho the great

Mr.

Mr. *Dryden* at his Time, fell in with the Party againſt the Whigs, and wrote a Play containing a Paralel between the *French* Holy League, and the *Engliſh* Act and Covenant, which was ſtop'd at firſt from being Acted, by the then L—d *Ch——n*, but was afterwards ordered to be Acted: Which ſhews that the Power of the L——d *Ch——n* was then as great as it is now.

But if by Licentiouſneſs is only meant expoſing Vice in high Stations, then 'tis time to put an end to it; for I cannot ſee that 'tis poſſible to write good *Tragedy* or good *Comedy* without it; and 'tis my Opinion it is the real Buſineſs of the Stage, to redicule and ſatyrize Vice in any Shape, and eſpecially thoſe which are moſt in Faſhion, in order to deter People from the Practice of it.

It is about twelve Years ſince dumb ſhew Pantomines and other rediculous Entertainments came firſt into Vogue, and as the Degeneracy of the Stage hath exhibited ſuch low and mechanical Diverſions; I think it will not be improper to give an Account of the Opinion of the impartial Judges at that Time.

The firſt pretended Reaſon of introducing this Stuff, ſay they, is owing to the Dearth of good Writers for the Stage. I grant, indeed, that they are very Scarce; and I will add,

add, that if Things go on at this rate much longer, there may, for ought I know, be as great a Dearth of Common Senſe, as there is now of good Plays, and of fine Dramatic *Poets*. But how can it be expected that we ſhould have good Writers, while Things ſtand as they do at preſent? For all Arts are kept up by the Encouragement that is given them; and Poetry in a particular manner depends upon the good Will of the Town. There are no great Places nor valuable Stipends annexed to that Profeſſion: The only Way that a tolerable Livelihood can be made of it, is by the Stage; and if that is ſhut up from its Profeſſors, the Art it ſelf will certainly decline: Whereas when that is open, and the Town is diſpoſed in its Favour, there will always be ſuch an Emulation and Deſire of excelling, as will not fail to raiſe up Perſons, who, with the help of a tolerable Genius, will be able to ſupply us with good Performances. It ought to be conſidered further, that a Dramatic Poem, with relation to its Contexture, is a Mechanical Thing, like a Watch, or an Orrery; that it requires a great deal of Art, to put all its Wheels and Springs into right Motion, which cannot be done to Perfection, without long Uſe and Experience; and that cannot be expected without conſiderable Encouragement.

I will venture to appeal even to our ingenious *Harlequin* Authors and *Scaramouch* Wits, whether they do not find that long Practice, join'd with the preſent Favour of the Town, has improv'd their Genius, and corrected their Stile; and whether they do not think the Entertainments, which are acting at the Theatres, much Superior to their firſt attempt upon this antic Model. Suppoſing therefore that we have at preſent no excellent Writers for the Stage, muſt we therefore reſolve never to have any; which muſt be the caſe, if all our young Beginners are diſcountenanced. For it ought not to be concluded, that any Man's firſt Eſſay, eſpecially in Dramatic Writings, is the utmoſt Trial of his Strength, his *Ne plus ultra*; and yet, according to the preſent Diſpoſition of the Town, and the Managers of the Stage, this ſeems to be their manner of Judging: Whereas if that Candour prevailed, which is eſſential to true Criticiſm; great Allowance would be made to a young Poet; and if there appear'd any Spirit in his firſt Introduction, or fine Strokes of a promiſing Genius; a Thouſand little Errors of Stile, or Deviation from Mechanical Rules, which may proceed from want of Experience, or the Heat of a Youthful Imagination, would be overlook'd; and thus by a kind Reception of his firſt Piece, he would be encouraged

to

to proceed with more Caution and Judgment in his next Undertaking.

If this Rule were obſerved, I doubt not but we ſhould in a few Years have as good Authors as we have had in former Times; for I cannot admit, as it is commonly ſuggeſted, that we have not the ſame Genius now, as we had in former Times; but there is not the ſame Encouragement, and that is the Foſter Mother of all Arts. The Stage is now become almoſt inacceſſible, and I could mention ſeveral Plays that have been rejected at one of our Theatres, which were equal to the firſt Productions of ſome of our beſt Poets, to admit Pantomine and Entertainments.

The next Argument in Conſequence of the Former, *viz.* That a good Entertainment of this ſort is better than a bad Play. Now I would willingly know what is a good Entertainment of this ſort; and whether we have yet had any? If we have, I declare for my part that I never yet ſaw a Play (and I have ſeen many wretched ones) which did not give me ten Times the Pleaſure that the beſt of theſe Theatrical Devices ever did; for it muſt be a very execrable Play indeed, in which there is not to be found ſome little Sparks of good Wit, or good Senſe. But what is there in theſe new Entertainments,

to

to which the Slight of a *Jugler*, the Agility of a *Morice Dancer*, or the Movement of a *Puppit Shew*, are not at leaſt equal? I allow even in theſe Feats, ſomething very Curious, and worth Obſervation; but I think them far beneath the Dignity of a *Theatre Royal*, and unworthy to be obtruded every Night, upon Gentlemen of the beſt Senſe.

The pretty Gentlemen of the Town, who love to be thought great Wits, excuſe themſelves for frequenting theſe ſtupid Innovations, by telling us that it is only to paſs away a few idle Hours, and to make themſelves Merry; imagining perhaps, that they have no other Effect upon them. But I have obſerved that our Manners are in a great Meaſure influenced, by the Characters which are preſented to us upon the Stage; and I am afraid that the Groteſque Habits, in which ſome of them effect to Appear, are Copied from theſe Models; ſo methinks their light triping Pumps, and large harneſs Buckles, their ſhort mop Wigs, black Bags, and Windmill Sweeps, ſavour ſtrongly of ſuch an Imitation; ſo that many fine Gentlemen now a Days, look more like *Harlequins* and *Scaramouches*, then Perſons of Fortune and Diſtinction.

Another Argument is, that theſe Entertainments are realy no Innovations, but can

be traced up to the firſt Inſtitution of the Stage: For which they quote the ancient *Greek* and *Roman Pantomines*. Now this with Submiſſion, is defending Stupidity, by Diſcovering of Ignorance; for the ancient *Pantomines* were no more like our modern *Harlequins*, than the Perſonating of natural Characters, and Mimicing probable Actions, are like inventing unnatural Characters, and performing the moſt monſtrous improbable Actions. In the former caſe there may be a great deal of good moral Inſtruction, in the latter nothing but Abſurdity and groſs Impoſition. But ſuppoſing them to be alike, what would be the Conſequence of this? Are we obliged to imitate the Ancients in all their Abſurdities, as well as their Beauties? And have we not the Previledge to improve upon the Experience of above two thouſand Years? At this rate, our modern Comedians ought to ſtrole about in a Cart, becauſe *Theſpis*, the firſt of that Profeſſion, did ſo. And by the ſame Rule a Droll, a Raree-ſhew, or a Play, Acted by vile Strolers, would be a more perfect Entertainment, becauſe in a more ancient Manner, than the beſt Performances in *Drury Lane*.

The laſt Apology I ſhall mention for theſe Buffooneries is made by the Players themſelves; which is, that they are agreeable to the

the Taſte of the Town, and it is their Intereſt to comply with that.

As to the firſt part of this Argument, I know not what to anſwer, unleſs they will acquaint me what they mean by the Taſte of the Town. If they mean the Opinion of School Boys, City Prentices, and Old Women, I allow that theſe Diverſions are admirably calculated for their Taſte, (as I think they ought to mean;) in the general Approbation of the Men of Senſe, I never met with one Man of that Character who ever preſumed to ſpeak in their Defence, even the Beaux and the Belles, who frequent them moſt, pretend to diſlike them; and as every Body knows upon what Motives they go to the Play-Houſe, I will be anſwerable for them that they will not deſert it, even tho' the beſt Plays in our Language were to be Subſtituted in the room of theſe Entertainments.

To the ſecond part of the Argument, *viz.* that their Intereſt is to comply with the Taſte of the Town, however vitiated: I can only ſay, I am ſorry for it, and wiſh, in caſe it be ſo, that the *Theatre* were under the Management of Perſons who would be above promoting their own Lucre, by propogating of Folly and Nonſenſe: I wiſh this the more, becauſe all the Faults of the beſt Writers for

the Stage, are derived from this Source. To this we muſt aſcribe the mad ranting rhiming Plays of Mr. *Dryden*; whoſe Neceſſities obliged him to Sacrifice his own good Senſe, to the prevailing bad Taſte of the Town, and the Intereſt of mercenary Comedians. *Ben Johnſon* is ſaid to have writ his *Bartholomew Fair*, in like compliance of the then reigning Humour, after the ill Reception of his Tragedy of *Catiline*: And all the ſad Stuff that we meet with in *Shakeſpear*, muſt be imputed to the ſame Cauſe. This gives me an Opportunity of tranſcribing a Paſſage out of Mr. *Pope*'s Preface to his late Edition of that *Author*; when ſpeaking of his Imperfections, he attributes them chiefly to his being a Player, and goes on thus: "They [*i. e.* the Players] have ever had a "Standard to themſelves, upon other Prin-"ciples than thoſe of *Ariſtotle*; as they live by "the Majority, ſo they know no Rule but "that of pleaſing the preſent Humour, and "complying with the Wit in Faſhion; a "Conſideration which brings all their Judg-"ment to a ſhort Point. *Players* are juſt "ſuch Judges of what is Right, as *Taylors* of "what is Graceful; and in this View it will "be but fair to allow, that moſt of our "*Author's* Faults are leſs to be aſcribed to "his wrong Judgment as a Poet, than to his

"right

" right Judgment as a Player. " I hope the Gentlemen of the *Theatres*, and eſpecially *Drury Lane*, will not think that any Thing I have ſaid, proceeds from a Prejudice againſt them ; I am conſcious to my ſelf of the contrary, and could prove that this Argument tends to their Advantage, as well as to the Intereſt of good Senſe and Literature in General: For whatever Reaſon thoſe of the New Houſe might have for giving into ſuch Proſtitutions, thoſe of the Old Houſe could have none ; and I am ſatisfied that they cannot boaſt of any great Benefit for all their additional Charge and Trouble. They are ſupplied with a Company of excellent Players, many of whom, in their different Characters, are Inimitable. They have long received the Applauſe and Encouragement of the Town, I mean of the ſenſible Part of it ; and I can only pity them, if they will ſuffer themſelves to be ſupplanted in the Eſteem of Mankind, by the poor Tricks and Monkey Geſticulations of *Tumblers* and *Dancing Maſters*.

I cannot paſs by this Diſcourſe, without taking Notice of another new Taſte, (as 'tis called) which is bringing young Children upon the Stage, which are ſtiled *Lilliputions*; nor can I conceive their Intentions in that, whether it is to train them up from their

Infan-

Infancy to the Stage, that they may, as we ſay by our good Phyſicians, be regurlarly bred; I think the Apperance of theſe little *Faries* in ſuch Dreſſes at a Boarding School, at the Time of breaking up, might be very pretty and entertaining to their Parents; but to bring them on the Stage is abſurd and ridiculous, and a Man of Senſe may be as highly delighted at a *Dancing Maſter's Ball*, as at one of theſe Entertainments, or Ballad Operas. But as the Stage is under the Inſpection of the preſent L—d *Ch——n*, and as all theſe may be called Interludes, and conſequently come under his Inſpection; I hope to ſee a ſtop put to them, and that for the future we ſhall have nothing but what is Moral and Edifying on the Stage; and all ſuch ridiculous Stuff turned out of doors. If we conſider what a prodigious effect Theatrical Peformances have on the Minds of People, and how much they are to be drawn by ill Examples, as well as Good; therefore 'tis to our Advantage to keep to a juſt Regulation, and for that Reaſon, I think that ſuch Entertainments ought not only to be reſtrained, but entirely prohibited.

Some Accounts of PLAY-HOUSES.

AT the firſt erecting a Play-Houſe in *Goodman's-Fields*, it was look'd upon to be ſo great a Nuſance to the City of *London*, that the *Lord Mayor* and Court of *Aldermen* addreſs'd the *King*, for the ſurpreſſing thereof, as tending to debauch the Morals of young Perſons, and to be agreat hindrance to the Trade and Induſtry of that part of the Town; which had the following Effect: The Players were ſilenced, and the Houſe put down, to the utter Ruin of the then Proprietor and Maſter thereof: But what were the Conſequences? A ſecond Perſon ſets it up again, in Defiance of the former Regulation, and ſhews away Pompouſly, and without any Moleſtation; carries on a great deal of Buſineſs, (as they call it) and with ſuch Succeſs, that he got in a Subſcription to build a magnificent *Theatre*; but choſe to leave it, to come with his Company to *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* Theatre; (but for what Reaſon I could never underſtand, unleſs the other Theatre had not room enough to ſeat his Audience) and here indeed they play'd ſeveral new Pieces, but with little Succeſs; one of which

(a

(a moſt ſtupid piece of Drollery) call'd, *All Alive and Merry*, a Comedy, which I think never was printed, tho' I am of Opinion the Copy would have ſold well at this time of Day. As for Entertainments they were as well hit off there, as at either of the Theatres; and I never ſaw a better Tranſmutation of Statues, Chairs, and Flower Pots.

The beſt and moſt ſucceſsful Play that was Acted there, was the Tragedy of King *Charles* the Firſt, tho' as 'twas obſerved by a very great Man, that it was a Scene more becoming a Pulpit. But I am inform'd that they were getting up a Dramatic Piece, call'd the *Rump*, which gave no little Offence to the Legiſlature, which was ſilenced with the Houſe.

Another ſet of Actors appears at the *Hay-Market* Theatre, under the Title of the Great *Mogull*'s Company of Comedians; and the Buſineſs there carry'd on by them proved very ſucceſsful, (and no wonder) for I am inform'd that this Company was the firſt that introduced *Common Senſe* in Perſon on the Stage, and was play'd to a crouded Audience for Fifty ſucceeding Nights; which I hope is a ſufficient Token of the Veneration the Public bears to her Name. But notwithſtanding this Succeſs, theſe *Mogulites* ſhew'd

a want of common Decency: For altho' the Patent Play-Houſes pay a due Obſervance to the *Wednesdays* and *Fridays* in *Lent*, yet theſe Heathens had no reſpect to theſe Days, but play'd on; and would continue ſo to do (even in the *Paſſion* Week) had not they been expreſly forbid by the Lord *Chamberlain*.

After theſe, and at the ſame Place, comes another Company of Players, who ſaid in their Bills, *Drop'd from the Clouds*: But as to the Buſineſs they carried on there, I believe 'twas very inſignificant and trifling, and the Advantages to themſelves the ſame; therefore I ſuppoſe that they are gone to the Clouds again, for I have heard nothing of their Appearance on Earth ſince.

I remember the Right *Reverend* the Fathers of the *Church* petitioned his late Majeſty to put a ſtop to the *Maſquerades*, at which I was much ſurprized; for I think the *Waltham Black Act* would have done it, if put into Execution; however it had the deſired Effect for a ſmall Time, but in a few Months another was brought on in a private Manner; (to oblige ſome ſqueamiſh Lady of Quality I ſuppoſe, who might be in a longing Condition) but notwithſtanding this Prohibition, they now go forward as uſual; whether this is owing to a Miſtake in wrong judging at the Event of Things, I know not; tho' in Affairs

of other Natures, I have ſeen great Miſunderſtandings; for what hath been found neceſſary to be undone this Year, hath been done again the next, witneſs, Spirituous Liquors, Duty of Salt, *&c.* So that the Friends to the Stroling Players who are now quite excluded from following that Buſineſs for the preſent, may hope for a countermand in a little time; and thoſe Authors who cannot write Plays without *Satyr*, may once again have the Opportunity to employing their Talent. How dangerous a Weapon is Vice in the Hands of one endowed with uncommon Talents, they would enflame the World, having Power and Capacity to contrive and execute Miſchief.

The *Dragon of Wantley* made its firſt Appearance at the New Theatre in the *Hay-Market*, but with little Succeſs there, being obliged to diſmiſs the Audience on the Third Night; but hath ſince been play'd at *Covent-Garden* with ſuch Succeſs, that it is now the Forty Second Night. I know not how the Author of that tip top Piece of Wit, Humour, and Satyr, will come of in reſpect to the *Italian* Caponiers, for I am informed it has nointed them to a Purpoſe; and he being a Singer himſelf, I know no better Way than to go and Sing with them, as he is heavier than either of them by two S——s, he may chance to drown their Voices.

Imme-

Immediately after the paſſing of this Act of Parliament for ſilencing the Players, comes out a Comedy call'd the *Projectors*, Printed without being Acted; in which, among the other Perſons of the Drama, is the *Primiere Miniſter* in a late Reign; which Character, every Perſon who bought the Play thought to have ſeen handled in a very ſevere Manner; but alas! to their great Diſappointment, he has not one Word to ſay for himſelf from the beginning of the Play to the end of it.

There were likewiſe Publiſhed, The *Intrigueing Milliners* and *Attornies Clerks*, a Mock Tragedy: Written in Imitation of — The Stile and Manner of — But who theſe Of's can mean I know not, for had it been writ in Imitation of any good Authors as *Shakeſpear*, *Dryden*, *Otway*, *Addiſon*, &c. what Reaſon could the Author of this Piece have for concealing their Names! Or if it were in the Stile and Manner of *Congreve*, *Wycherly*, *Beaumont*, *Fletcher*, *Lee*, &c. is there any Reaſon that a Man ſhould be aſhamed to imitate their Stile and Manner of of Writing, and let the World to know it? And as this Piece hath Novelty in the Title, I don't doubt but it hath Sold well; for we have had *Mock Comedy*, and *Mock Opera's* a great while; but I have not heard of the

Appearance of *Mock Tragedy* before this voluminous Piece came forth, which was Printed by a Subſcription at two Shillings, with a tack of a Number of curious Poems in the Manner and Stile of—and as it was all at ſo moderate a Price to the Subſcribers, there is no Reaſon to doubt the Author's Succeſs, eſpecially as there were ſeveral pithy Puffs and Encomiums to the Author appear'd in the Papers immediately after it was Publiſhed, but whether they were Genuine, I leave to the Deſeſſion of—— tho' they appear'd to me to be in the Stile and Manner of——

About the ſame Time was Publiſhed another Dramatic Piece, call'd *The City Farce*, deſigned for the Theatre in *Drury-Lane*.

But whether this Piece was deſigned ſo by the Manager of the Theatre, or the Author, I know not; but if it was by the latter, I can affirm that it was not ill Judged; for if the Piece had not been loaded with Beauties, yet it would have loſt none that it had, by being Play'd at this Houſe, which hath been the caſe at otherHouſes with many good Plays.

To this laſt mention'd Farce is prefix'd, An Addreſs to the Gentlemen of the *Pit*, including a Propoſal for the mutual Benefit of the *Public*, the *Dramatic Writers*, and the *Managers* of the *Theatres*.

The

The Reflections that naturally ariſes from this Propoſal, engages me to beg this Queſtion, *viz.* Why this Addreſs ſhould be particularly to the Gentlemen of the *Pit* only? Or is there no other Part of an Audience entitled to Cenſure? For 'tis my Opinion that the *Boxes* do ſometimes hold Men of Underſtanding, and the *Galleries* are not always deſtitute of Wits, and Smarts: Nay, for my own part I can affirm, that even among the *Gods* in the upper Regions, for a Twelve-penny Ordinary, I have found Wit and Satyr as Novel and Fluent, and as agreeably hit off, as in any other Part of the Houſe; and it is my Opinion that theſe Regions are as much reſorted to by Men of Senſe, as any other Part of the Houſe whatſoever; and the Price is beſt ſuited to the Capacity and Circumſtances of the Men of Genius and Knowledge, (for there is an old Saying, ſhew me a rich Man and I'll ſhew you an A—ſs) for all wiſe Men are not Rich: And in this upper Gallery, I have ſometimes ſeen a ſedate Clergyman, a ſtiff Quaker, a Deſenting Parſon, an Anabaptiſt Teacher, or a Popiſh Prieſt, ſet as ſnug as a S——w in Beans, who would not have been ſeen in the Pit for a hundred Guineas.

But as this Piece of Farce hath not been Play'd at *Drury-Lane*, tho' intended; I will attempt

attempt to make a ſecond Propoſition: As the former Scheme is ſo very extraordinary, *viz.* for the mutual Benefit of the Public, the Dramatic Writers, and the Maſters of Theatres; I think I cannot do leſs than to requeſt the Manager of the Houſe where this Piece of Farce and Addreſs was intended to be play'd, that he would either have the *Farce* got up, or admit the Author to harangue the Addreſs to the Gentlemen of the Pit, by way of Entertainment, that they may paſs Judgment thereon, and that all the Dramatic Writers may have Admittance into one Part of the Houſe for this Time *Gratis*, that they may be ready to Support or Object to that Part of the Addreſs which concerns them. And as there is now but two Theatres ſubſiſting, I beg that the Manager of the other Houſe may attend at this Farcical Addreſs or Entertainment, to partake the Benefit of that Part which concerns him; which I hope will have ſo good an Effect, as to make him to Compoſe another Addreſs, inſtead of his Pantomines and Entertainments.

There is a common Saying, that all Acts of Parliament have a Hole to creep out at, (except Burying in Woollen) which brings me to take Notice of the little Theatre or rather great Room in *Viller's-Street, York-Buildings*, where

where Dramatic Pieces uſed ſometimes to be play'd. After the Act for ſilencing the Play-Houſes had paſs'd the Royal Aſſent, this Houſe was taken by Poet *Fuſtian* for an *Oratorial Theatre*, and was open'd with wonderful bluſtering Puffs, by giving Notice that he had qualified himſelf according to Act of Parliament before the Bench of Juſtices at *Hicks's-Hall*; and there began to ſhew away with an Oratorial Harangue of the Trial of Alderman *Philpot* for burning or taking the *Spaniſh* Fleet without leave, *&c.* But the very Perſons who granted this Licence, was ſo very uncivil as to ſend him to the Houſe of Correction for making an ill Uſe of it; which ſilenced the New Orator, and put an end to this modern Way of Preaching at this Place.

The Miſcarriage of this *Orator* and his *Chapel*, brings me to take Notice of the Original *Oratory*, which was firſt ſet up in the Garret over the Market-Houſe in *Newport-Market*, but was afterwards removed to *Lincoln's-Inn-Fields* near *Clare-Market*, and hath been carried on with ſome ſeeming Decency for many Years: But of late it hath been made more like an Auction Room, or a Prize Fighting, by the Audience which have appear'd there; whether it was intended to ruin the *Orator*, or to put down his Houſe,

by

by ſpoyling i'ts Reputation? For in this Religious Houſe I have ſeen ſuch Fighting, Cudgelling, Hectoring, Bullying, Swearing, Singing, Hollowing, Scoulding, Bawling, Baming, Puffing, Sweating, Staring, Bullocking, Lying, Quibling, Cajoling, Contradicting, and crying Murder between the Audience and the petty Expounder in the Roſtrum, that I was much afraid the poor Man would have been *De Witted*; and it was with much Difficulty that the good old Soul eſcaped the Fury of the Mob, which were met there at that Time. But I would adviſe the Proprietor, if he thinks to continue his Oratorial Puffs, that he would interceed with the L——l —re— that they would grant him a File of Granadiers to Gaurd his Roſtrum, as they do the Stage; or otherwiſe I would have him to look out for five hundred Subſcribers to Sets of Hyp-Doctors, at Twenty Guineas, and retire at once from the rude Multitude with the ready Pence.

There were ſome other Dramatic Pieces publiſhed, and others I underſtand are in the Preſs, which ſhews, as my L——d *C—r—d* ſaid, that if they cannot have Satyr play'd, yet they may write and print, which will laſt much longer; this ſhews a Contradiction to what has been ſaid, that the Liberty

of

of the Stage hath no relation to the Liberty of the Preſs, but here it hath proved otherwiſe; for when the Stage is ſhut up, you ſee that Men will naturally reſort to the Preſs, as long as that continues open; and if ſome Writers ſhould carry this Liberty into Licentiouſneſs, what Reaſon can any Body give againſt reſtraining it, as well as the Licentiouſneſs of the Stage? Cannot the Preſs ſpread its Poiſon as far as the Stage, and be attended with the ſame miſcheivious Conſequence? And as Prohibitions commonly promote the Sale of Books, may not ſatyrical Pieces be drawn up in the Form of Plays, on purpoſe to be Prohibited? When neceſſitous Authors are deprived of writing for the Stage, and the moſt advantageous Branch of their Buſineſs cut off, what will not Neceſſity drive a Man to? And if the worthy Gentleman to whom we are obliged for Introducing theſe fine Pieces of Art, call'd Entertainments, or Dumb-Shews, ſhould publiſh them, as I hear he intends, who knows what may be the Conſequence; for while they only appear on the Stage and ſay nothing, 'tis no Treaſon; but yet (I muſt needs ſay) I have often thought both their Dreſs and Meaning very Hieroglyphical, and ſeem to point to Particulars; but I will not diſcover my Mind, to be a hin-

drance to the Sale of the Books; for I am of Opinion, that altho' this curious Work will make at leaſt ſix Volumes in Folio, that the Author will have a greater Number of Subſcribers, than ever *K——n* had to *Rapin*: So that if the publiſhing this Work, ſhould be a Means to bring the Preſs under a Licenſer, we may blame our ſelves for admitting ſuch ſpurious Nonſenſe on the Stage, which was never intended for that purpoſe. But now I am going to make a very wide, copious, and intricate Enquiry; (that neither will lye within the Compaſs of my Diſcourſe, nor the Capacity of my Pen) to enquire who is the Man that can write a Dramatic Piece, to paſs the Approbation of the Lord *Chamberlain*, the Manager of a Play-Houſe, the Actors, and the numerous Audience? If we conſider the Difficulties he has to go thro' in ſuch an Undertaking, I think we cannot expect to ſee many good Pieces come on the Stage, or at leaſt many ſucceſsful ones; for as I have ſaid before, Vice in high Stations muſt not be expoſed; ſo that we muſt be content to have Wit without Satyr, and that is like a Sickle without a Whetſtone, which will make the Buſineſs of the Harveſt go on but very ſlow; nor will the Writings of the Poet in the Dramatic Way, greatly load his Pockets at this

this Time; and there is no doubt but many Authors who would have attempted to write in that Way before this Embargo, but now would think it a Diſparagement to their Underſtandings to attempt it.

So that from this Time, ſince we are not likely to improve our Talents in the Dramatic Writings, let us not ſully what we already are Maſters off, by keeping up Entertainments and Buffooneries, inſtead of the Plays of *Shakeſpear*, *Ben Johnſon*, *Congreve*, *Wycherley*, *Steele*, &c. But I am inform'd that the Old Houſe are preparing and geting up ſeveral of *Shakeſpear*'s Plays, in order to perform them on certain Days of the Week, by which any Perſon going on ſuch Days, may be ſure of being Entertained in an agreeable Manner, and not to be peſter'd with Entertainments: (a laudable Undertaking, if kept up.) But I am Inform'd likewiſe, that the great Charge they have been at for Machenery, *&c.* which will be entirely uſeleſs, (ſay they) therefore muſt dwindle away and not be laid down at once. But in order to oblige thoſe Ladies and Gentlemen that cannot part with theſe darling Performances, I will make a Propoſition of Indulgence, which will at once try the Fate of them, *viz.* Let one Night in a Week be ſet apart to play theſe Entertainments, and let two

or three ſeveral Sorts be put together, and thoſe that will beſt tally, and ſo divert theſe Sort of Gueſt, for four Hours; and although they could never ſee enough to ſatisfy them before, yet (I will engage) two Nights of this Sort will give them a Belly full; ſo that by this Means we may ſee a voluntary end put to theſe Entertainments.

The STAGE is Uſeful to Mankind in General, and Inſtrumental to their Happineſs, *viz.*

BY Happineſs I could never underſtand any thing but Pleaſure, nor have I any Notion of Happineſs that does not agree with Pleaſure, or can I perceive how any one can be Happy without being Pleaſed, or Pleaſed without being Happy; 'tis univerſally acknowledged by Mankind, that Happineſs conſiſts in Pleaſure. And Providence ſeems to have ſufficiently declared that Pleaſure was intended for our Spring and Fountain of Action, when he made it the Incentive to that by which we propagate our Kind, and preſerve Ourſelves;

as

as if Self-Love, without Pleaſure, were inſufficient for either; for as ſeveral Perſons have been known rather to Die than to go thro' tedious Courſes of Phyſick; ſo I make no doubt but others would have taken the ſame Reſolution, rather than ſupported Life by a perpetual Courſe of Eating, which had differ'd nothing from a Courſe of Phyſick, if Eating and Pleaſure had not been Things inſeparable. Now as 'tis Pleaſure that obliges Man to preſerve himſelf, that Pleaſure has ſometimes the Force to prevail upon him to his own Deſtruction. For as Monſieur *Paſchal* obſerves, the very Men who Hang and Drown themſelves, are Inſtigated by a ſecret Pleaſure, which they have by a Thought that they ſhall be freed from Pain.

Since therefore Man, who in every Thing that he does propoſes Pleaſure to himſelf, conſequently in Pleaſure conſiſts his Happyneſs; and tho' a Man may always propoſe it, yet he very often falls ſhort of it: For Pleaſure is not in his own Power, ſince if it were, Happineſs would be the ſame; the want of which has always been the Complaint of Men both ſacred and ſecular in all Ages, and in all Countries, and in every Condition; *Man that is Born of a Woman is but of few Days, and full of Trouble*, Job xiv. 1. Of the ſame Nature are the Complaints of *Horace*, which

which are ſo Fine, ſo Poetical, and ſo becoming of the beſt Antiquity,

Hor. Ode. Lib. II.

Scandit æratas Vitioſa Naves
Curæ, nec turmas equitum & relinquit
Ocior Cervis, & agente nimbos.
Ocyor Euro.

Nor is the I. Ode of the III. Book leſs Poetical

——Timor et minæ
Scandunt eodem quo Dominus, neque
Decidit ærata triremi, &
Poſt equitam ſedit atra cura.

And thoſe who have made the moſt Reflections on it, have been the moſt ſatisfied of it, and more particularly Philoſophers, who by their voluminous Inſtructions, and their laborious Directions which they have left to Poſterity, have plainly declared, that to be Happy is one of the greateſt of Difficulties.

And the Reaſon why they of all Men have found it ſo is, becauſe they always propounded to owe their Happineſs to Reaſon; tho' one might think that Experience might have convinced them, that the moſt thinking and moſt reaſonable Part of Mankind, had always moſt complained.

For

For Reaſon may often afflict us, and make us Miſerable, by ſetting our Impotence, or our Guilt before us; but what it generally does, is maintaining us in a languiſhing State of Indifference, which perhaps is a greater remove from Pleaſure, than from Affliction, which may be ſaid to be the ordinary State of Men.

It is plain then that our Reaſon by maintaining us in that State, is an Impediment to our Pleaſure, which is our Happineſs: For to be pleaſed, a Man muſt come out of his ordinary State; and nothing in this Life can bring him out of it but Paſſion, which Reaſon pretends to Combat.

As nothing but Paſſion can pleaſe us, which every one knows by Experience; for when any Man is pleaſed, he finds by Reflection that at the ſame Time he is moved, and the Pleaſure which every Man meets oftenеſt is the Pleaſure of Senſe.

Let any one examine himſelf in that, and he will find that Pleaſure is owing to Paſſion; for the Pleaſure vaniſhes with the Deſire, and is ſucceeded by a Loathing, which is Grief.

Since nothing but Pleaſure can make us Happy, then to be very Happy, we muſt be much Pleaſed; and ſince nothing but Paſſion can pleaſe us, it follows, that to be very

very much Pleaſed, we muſt be very much Moved; and as a convincing Proof, he who finds a great deal of Pleaſure is extreamly moved.

And that very heighth and fullneſs of Pleaſure which we are promiſed in a Future State, muſt, we are told, proceed from Paſſion, or ſomething which reſembles it; at leaſt, no Man has ſo much as pretended it will be the reſult of Reaſon: For we ſhall be deliver'd from theſe mortal Organs, and Reaſon will be then no more.

Thus 'tis plain, that the Happineſs both of this Life and the other, is owing to Paſſion, and not Reaſon: But tho' we can never be Happy by the Force of Reaſon, yet while we are in this Life we cannot poſſibly be Happy without it, or againſt it. For ſince Man is by his Nature a Reaſonable Creature, to ſuppoſe Man Happy againſt Reaſon, is to ſuppoſe him Happy againſt Nature, which is abſurd and monſtrous. As a Man muſt be pleas'd to be Happy, ſo he muſt be moved to be Pleaſed; and to pleaſe him to a Heighth, you muſt move him in Proportion; but then the Paſſions muſt be raiſed after ſuch a manner as to take Reaſon along with them; for if Reaſon is quite overcome, the Pleaſure is neither Long or Sincere, nor indeed, Safe: For how many that have been

tranſ-

tranſported beyond their Reaſon have never more recovered it? If Reaſon reſiſts, a Man's Breaſt becomes the Seat of Civil War, and the Combat makes him Miſerable. For theſe Paſſions that are in their Natures ſo very troubleſome, are only ſo, becauſe their Motions are always contrary to the Will, as Grief, Sorrow, Shame, and Jealouſy: And that which makes ſome Paſſions in their Natures pleaſant, is becauſe they move with the Will, as Love, Joy, Pity, Hope, Terror, and ſometimes Anger: But this is certain, that no Paſſion can move in thoſe a full conſent with the Will, unleſs at the ſame Time it be approv'd of by the Underſtanding; and no Paſſion can be allow'd of by the Underſtanding, that is not rais'd by its true Springs, and augmented by its juſt Degrees.

As 'tis ſo very rare to have our Paſſions thus rais'd, and ſo improv'd, which is the Reaſon that we are ſo ſeldom thoroughly and ſincerely Pleas'd: But in the *Drama*, the Paſſions are falſe and abominable, unleſs they are moved by their true Springs, or rais'd by their juſt Degrees: Thus are they moved, and thus are they rais'd, in every well writ *Tragedy*, 'till they come to as great a heighth as Reaſon can well bear; as the Motion has a Tendency

to the ſubjecting them to Reaſon, and the raiſing purges and moderates them: So that the Paſſions are ſeldom any where ſo pleaſing, and no where ſo Safe, as in *Tragedy*. This I hope will confirm, that to be Happy, is to be Pleas'd; and that to be Pleas'd, is to be moved in ſuch a Manner as is to be allow'd of by Reaſon: And as *Tragedy* moves us thus, it conſequently pleaſes us, and makes us Happy. Upon which I ſhall take an Occaſion to ſhew, that that Reaſoning and Thinking People, as *Philoſophers* are, have made the moſt complaint of the Miſeries of this Life, becauſe they have endeavour'd to deduce their Happineſs from Reaſon, and not from Paſſion. But another Reaſon may be given, which is, that ſuch Perſons by reaſon of the exactneſs, or moroſeneſs of their Judgment, are too ſcrupulous in the Allowance of their Paſſion: From whence it proceeds, that Things very rarely happen in Life, to raiſe their Paſſions in ſuch a Manner, as to approve them to their Underſtanding, and conſequently to make them move in conſent with their Wills.

From whence it proceeds, that ſplenetic Perſons are ſo very Unhappy, and ſo much harder to be pleas'd than others, which is daily confirmed by Experience: Indeed it is obſerved in ſplenetic Perſons, that their Paſſi-

Paſſions move for the moſt part with a contrary Motion to that of the Will, and by that means Afflict them, inſtead of Delighting them. It has been frequently obſerv'd, that no Nation in *Europe* is ſo much addicted to the Spleen as the *Engliſh*, and which is apparent to any Obſerver, from the reigning Diſtemper of the Clime, which is inſeparable from the Spleen; from that gloomy and ſullen Temper which is ſpread thro' the Nation, and a natural Diſcontentedneſs, which makes us ſo uneaſy to one another, becauſe we are uneaſy to ourſelves, and from our Jealouſies and Suſpicions of one another, and have often made us dangerous to the Government and to Ourſelves; and as we are more Splenitic than others, ſo conſequently more Thoughtful, and more Reflecting, and ſo more ſcrupulous in allowing our Paſſions; therefore Things ſeldom happen ſo agreeable in Life, as to move their Paſſions to their Reaſon, to entertain and and pleaſe them: And as there is no ſincere and true Pleaſure, unleſs our Paſſions are moved; nor is their any true Happineſs without Pleaſure; 'tis certain that the *Engliſh* have more need than other Nations of ſomething to raiſe their Paſſions in ſuch a Manner as will be agreeable to their Reaſon, and therefore, by Conſequence, have more need of the *Drama*.

Altho' it ſhould be granted that the *Theatre* makes People Happy for the preſent, yet (ſay ſome) it makes them Miſerable hereafter: Firſt by nouriſhing and fomenting their Paſſions, and Secondly by indulging their Vices, and making them Libertines: And that 'tis neither the Part of a prudent Man, or a good Chriſtian, to make choice of ſuch a momentry Delight as will be follow'd by ſo much Affliction.

Then ſay the Adverſaries of the Stage, the *Drama* tends to the making People Unhappy, becauſe it nouriſhes and foments thoſe Paſſions that occaſion the Folly and Imprudences from whence comes all their Misfortunes, as it Indulges Terror and Pity, and the reſt of the Paſſions, and not only Indulges Love were it is, but creates it where it was not: For ſays a certain *French* Author, who is famous for Criticiſm, that Purgation which *Ariſtotle* mentions, is meerly Chymerical; the more the Paſſions in any one is moved, the more obnoxious they are to be moved, and the more unruly they grow: But Mounſieur *De St. Evermont* does no only contradict *Ariſtotle*, but every Man's daily Experience; for every Man of Senſe finds that the longer he frequents Plays, the harder he is to be pleas'd, and to be moved; and when ſuch a one is touched

by

by a Scene, we conclude the Scene is well Writ both for Nature and Art.

If a Perſon who has long frequented the *Theatres*, and are ſo hard to be moved to Compaſſion, that a Poet is obliged ſo to contrive his Incidents and Characters that the laſt ſhall be moſt Deplorable, and the firſt moſt proper to move Compaſſion; may it not be very well ſuppos'd, that ſuch a one will not be over obnoxious to feel too much Compaſſion upon the View of Calamaties which happen every Day, when they and the Perſon to whom it happens may not ſo much as once in an Age have all the Qualifications that are required extreamly to touch them.

But whereas 'tis urged, that the Drama, and particular Tragedy, manifeſtly indulges Love where it is, and creates it where it is not: To this I Anſwer, that if the Love which is ſhewn in Tragedy is lawful and regular, or is not ſo; if it is not, why then it is ſhewn unfortunate in the Catraſtrophe, which is ſufficient to make an Audience averſe from the engaging in the Exceſſes of that Paſſion: (for I pretend not to defend the Errors and Corruptions of the Stage) But if the Love that is ſhewn is lawful and regular, nothing makes a Man Happier than that Paſſion; and as it certainly makes him Hap-

py for the preſent, neither is their any Paſſion that can make him Happier for the future. For as we have a very high Opinion of a beloved Object, ſo it makes us endeavour to become worthy of it, to increaſe in Knowledge and Virtue, and not only frequently reclaims us from groſſer Pleaſures, which we were fond of before, but begets in us an utter Deteſtation of unnatural Vices, which have been too frequently practiſed in this Kingdom of late Years.

The Adverſaries to the Stage, pretend that the *Drama* tends to make Men Unhappy, becauſe it indulges and encourages their Vices: But 'tis my Opinion that the Drama, and particularly Tragedy in its Purity, is ſo far from having that Effect, that it muſt of neceſſity make Men Virtuous; becauſe it moderates thoſe Paſſions, whoſe Exceſſes cauſe their Vices; it likewiſe inſtructs them in their Duty, both by its Fable and its Sentences: For Inſtance, ſhould any Perſon have an Intention at a favourable Opportunity to commit a barbarous Murder for the ſake of Lucre, would not the Appearance of the Ghoſt in *Hamlet* make him ſhudder and put off the Perpetration of ſuch an Act?

Others will have it that the Corruption of the Manners, proceeded from the Abuſes of the Stage; How comes it to paſs then that we never heard of any ſuch Complaint before

the

the Reſtoration of King *Charles* II. ? Since 'tis plain that the *Drama* flouriſh'd in the Reign of King *James* I. and with Licentiouſneſs. If this general Corruption be attributed to the Stage, from thence we may infer, that the greateſt Corruption muſt be in thoſe Parts where the Theatres are moſt Frequented, or moſt Licentious, which is not true: For in *France*, the Theatres are leſs Licentious than ours, and yet the Corruption of Manners is there as great, (if you except our Drinking) which hath never been ſaid to proceed from the Licentiouſneſs of the Stage. In *Germany* and in *Italy* the Theatres are leſs frequented: For in *Italy* they ſeldom have Plays unleſs in the Carnival; and in moſt of the little *German* Sovereignties, they have not conſtant Theatres; and yet, in *Germany*, they Drink more than we; and in *Italy*, they are more Intemperate in the Uſe of Women, as well as unnatural Vices.

And altho' ſuch heavy Complaints have been made againſt our Theatre and the Drama, inſomuch that 'tis brought under the Inſpection of a *Licenſer*; yet I don't find any Complaints will be heard againſt our *Italian Operas*, tho' more could be ſaid againſt any of our Theatres; but as the Price of going there is too exhorbitant for the lower Claſs, or even the midling People; I ſhall ſay as the poor

Fel-

Fellow did, when he ſaw a great Man fall into the Mud, *Ill not meddle with State Affairs.*

Upon the Reformation, the Corruption of Manners appear'd with all the Fury of Libertiniſm, even before the Play-Houſe was Reeſtabliſhed, and long before it could have any Influence on Manners; ſo that there was another Cauſe of that Corruption, and not the Drama. But that which gave the Stage ſo licentious a Vent in thoſe Days, was not only the Permiſſion, but the Example of the Court, which for the moſt part was juſt arrived with the King; who having ſojourned for a conſiderable Time in the *Low Countries*, united the Spirit of the *French* Whoring, to the Fury of the *Dutch* Drinking: So that the Poets who writ in thoſe Days, were obliged to humour the depraved Taſte of their Audience; for if the Poets of theſe Times, had writ in a Manner purely Inſtructive, without any mixture of Lewdneſs, the Appetites of the Audience were ſo far Debauch'd, that they would have judg'd the Entertainment inſipid: 'Tis even ſo at this Day; How difficult would it be for *Shakeſpear*, or *Ben Johnſon*, to write a Ballad Opera to pleaſe the preſent Taſte of the Town? Nay, even that alone will not do, for you muſt clap an Entertainment to it; and what is the Uſe of them? To ſhew one Perſon how to run away with

with another Man's Wife, and to beat the Husband into the Bargain; or to ſhew a Villain how he may artfully ſet a Houſe on Fire, and to dreſs a Man like a Dog, or a Monkey, when (Heaven knows) they too much reſemble the Species without being ſhown ſo on the Stage; but this I call the Corruption of Foreign Luxury, and I hope this may be called an Abuſe of the *Drama*; and I am ſorry that theſe modern Vices have ſuch an Influence upon us which calls our Conduct in Queſtion; ſo that the Licentiouſneſs of the Stage at this Time cannot proceed from the Drama, but rather from having no Drama at all.

So reaſonable a Diverſion as the Drama in its Purity, can never encourage or incline Men to evil Actions, or to ſo unreaſonable ones as Gaming, or ſo brutal as Drunkenneſs; for theſe two Vices have always been ſhewn as Odious and Ridiculous on the Stage; as for Drunkenneſs, to ſhew the Sinner is ſufficient to diſcredit the Vice; for a Drunkard of Neceſſity, always appears either Odious or Ridiculous; and for a Gameſter, I never knew any one ſhewn in a Play but as a Fool, or a Knave, which I think may deter any Perſon from the purſuance of theſe Vices.

But as they flouriſh in Places that are too Remote, and in Perſons that are too abject for the Stage: Drinking and Gaming are Practiſed the fartheſt North, and the fartheſt Weſt, among Peaſants, as well as among *Dukes* and *Peers*; and yet ſome Perſons will urge that this Irreligion is caus'd by the Corruption of the Stage; they might with as much Modeſty deduce the Lewdneſs which is Practis'd in the Tin Mines in *Cornwall*, or the Coal Pits at *Newcaſtle*, to be owing to the Pits of the two Play-Houſes. But what can be ſaid of thoſe Gentlemen, who neither frequent the Theatres, nor converſe with thoſe that do, and yet are Guilty of the foremention'd Vices? It would be rediculouſly Abſurd to reply, that the Clergy are Corrupted by the Laity, whom it is their Buſineſs to Convert. I am ſatisfied the Church of *England* may boaſt of its Clergy more than any Church whatſoever: Their Clergy who are equally Illuſtrious for their Piety, and for their Learning; yet I may venture to Affirm, that there are ſome among them who can never be ſuppos'd to be corrupted by the Play-Houſes, who yet turn up a Bottle oftner than an Hour Glaſs, or box about a Pair of Tables with more Fervour than they do their Cuſhions, and Contemplate a Pair of Dice more frequently than

than the Fathers of Councils; and Meditate and depend on Hazard, more than they do upon Providence. *

And for that unnatural Sin before-mention'd, which is another growing Vice of the Age, it would be monſtrous to urge that it is the leaſt encouraged by the Stage, for 'tis either never mentioned there, or mentioned with the laſt Deteſtation.

And for the Love of Women, fomented by the Corruption and not the genuine Art of the Stage, tho' the Augmenting and Nouriſhing it cannot be defended, yet it may in ſome Meaſure be excus'd; becauſe it has more of Nature, and conſequently more Temptation, and leſs Malice than the preceeding three, which the Drama does not Encourage.

Becauſe it has a Check upon the other Vices, and particularly upon that unnatural Sin, in reſtraining of which, the Happineſs of Mankind is ſo nearly concerned. So that it can be proved that the Stage Encourages but one Vice, which of all others, is the leaſt Univerſal. For in the Country, Fornication and Adultery are ſeldom Practiſed, whereas Drunkenneſs rages in almoſt every Houſe; therefore how very unreaſonable is it to charge the Lewdneſs of the Times upon the Stage.

* Fleet Parſons.

The Stage is Uſeful to Government.

IT is Self-evident, that no Man who Governs, can Govern amiſs, as long as he follows the Dictates of Common Reaſon; which requires, that all who Govern, ſhould conſult the Intereſt of thoſe who are Governed; and thoſe Rulers have always been upon a wrong Foundation, who have had an Intereſt diſtinct from that of their People: Male Adminiſtration has always its Source from the Paſſions or Vices of thoſe who Govern.

The Paſſions which cauſe it, are for the moſt part Ambition, or the immoderate love of Pleaſures. Now as Tragedy Checks the firſt, by ſhewing the Great Ones of the Earth humbled; ſo it Corrects the laſt, by firing the Mind, and raiſing it to ſomething Nobler.

The Vices which cauſe the Male Adminiſtration, are either Vices of Weakneſs or of Malice; the firſt of which, cauſe Governours to Neglect; the laſt, to Oppreſs the People. The Vices of Weakneſs are Effeminary, Inconſiderateneſs, Inconſtancy, and Irreſolution.

Now nothing can be a better Remedy for Inconſiderateneſs, than Tragedy, which reminds them of their Duty, and inſtructs them

them by its Sentences and Morals, and often ſhews the ill and fatal Conſequences of Irregular Adminiſtration; for nothing is more capable of raiſing the Soul, and giving it that Greatneſs, Sublimity and Force, and that Courage and Conſtancy, which are the Qualifications that make Men deſerve to command others. For they who in all Ages, and in all Countries, have appear'd moſt to feel the Power of Tragedy, have been the moſt Deſerving and the Greateſt of Men. *Æſchylus* among the *Athenians*, was a great Captain as well as a Tragic Poet; and *Sophocles* was both an able Stateſman, and a victorious General.

If we look among the *Romans*, the very greateſt among them were particularly they who appear'd ſo far touch'd by the Drama, as either to write their Plays themſelves, or to build their Theatres: Witneſs *Scipio*, and *Lelius*, and *Lucullus*, and the great *Pompey*, and *Mecenas*, and *Julius*, and *Auguſtus Cæſar*.

And as no Man among the *French* has ſhewn ſo much Capacity, or ſo much greatneſs of Mind as *Richlieu*; ſo no Man among them has expreſs'd ſo much Paſſion for the Drama, which was ſo great, that he writ ſeveral Plays himſelf, with that very Hand that was employ'd at the ſame Time in laying a Plan of the *French* Monarchy.

Among

Among us, the Drama began to flouriſh in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*; and there is a Report that that great Princeſs appear'd to be ſo charm'd with it, as to Tranſlate with her own Hand a Tragedy from *Euripides*.

That Vice of Malice, which for the moſt Part cauſes the Male Adminiſtration of Governours is Cruelty, which nothing is ſo Capable of Correcting as Tragedy; which by diving into the hidden Springs of Nature, and making uſe of all that is Powerful in Her, in order to the moving Compaſſion, hath been always found ſufficient to Soften the moſt obdurate Heart.

Numerous Examples might be brought of this, but I ſhall content myſelf with that of *Alexander*: The *Theſalian* Tyrant, as the Story is related by *Dacier* in the Preface to his admirable Comment on the Poetic of *Ariſtotle*: This *barbarous Man, ſays* DACIER, *cauſing the* HECUBA *of* EURIPIDES *to be play'd before him, found himſelf ſo Touch'd, that he went out before the End of the firſt Act, ſeeing it would be a Shame for him to be ſeen to ſhed Tears for the Miſeries of* HECUBA, *or the Calamities of* POLYXENA, for him who embrewed his Hands every Day in the Blood of his Innocent Subjects. The Truth of it was, that he had ſome Apprehenſion that he ſhould be ſo far melted, as to be forſaken by that Spirit of Tyranny which he had ſo long poſſeſs'd,

poſſeſs'd, and ſhould go a private Perſon out of the Theatre, into which he had enter'd a Sovereign: Nay, he had like to have cauſed the Actor who had moved him thus, to be Executed; but the Criminal was ſecured by the very Remains of that Compaſſion, which was his only Crime.

Dacier cites another remarkable Paſſage from an ancient Hiſtorian, ſpeaking of the Inhabitants of *Arcadia*; he ſays, that their Humanity, and the Sweetneſs of their Tempers, the Purity of their Manners, and all their Virtues, proceeded from the Love which they had for Muſick, which by its Sweetneſs, corrected thoſe ill Impreſſions which a raw and unwholſom Air, together with the Hardſhips which they endured by their laborious way of Life had made on their Bodies, and on their Minds. *Polybius* accuſes *Ephorus*, for aſſerting that Muſick was invented on purpoſe for the deceiving Mankind; if ſo, what may we not juſtly aſſert of Tragedy? of which Muſick is but a ſmall Ornament, and which as far tranſends it, as the reaſoning Speech of a Man excells the Brutes inarticulate Voice.

For Tragedy is very proper to check the Motions, that they may at any time feel to Rebellion or Diſobedience, by ſtopping the very Sources of them. And Tragedy naturally checks the Ambitious, by ſhewing them the

the Great Ones of the Earth Humbled, and by ſetting before their Eyes the Uncertainty of Human Greatneſs, the ſudden Turns of State, and the unhappy Concluſion of Violence and Injuſtice. Tragedy diverts the Apprehenſion of Grievances, by the Delight which it gives us; diſcovers the Deſigns of factious Guides, by opening our Eyes; and Inſtructing us in our Duty, by the like Examples, and diſpels unreaſonable Jealouſies: For Perſons who are melted or terrified with the Sufferings of the Great, are rather apt to feel a ſecret Pleaſure from the Senſe they have, as being free from the like Calamities. Tragedy likewiſe diverts from unjuſt Deſigns by the Pleaſure it gives, ſince no Man, as long as he is eaſy himſelf, is in a Humour to diſturb others; and by purging thoſe Paſſions whoſe Exceſſes cauſe their Injuſtice, by Inſtructing them in their Duty, by raiſing their Minds, and ſetting them above Injuſtice, and making them good upon a Principle of Self-Love, and Terrifying them, by ſetting before their Eyes the unhappy Concluſion.

The Stage is Uſeful to Government, by having an Influence over thoſe that are Governed, in relation to the common Enemy; for nothing more raiſes and exalts our Minds and fires us with a nobler Emulation, than who ſhall beſt perform their Duty; therefore I ſhall ſhew by Experience that the Stage has

has been Uſeful to Government in General, as that of 1. *The Athenian.* 2. *The Roman.* 3. *The French.* 4. *The Engliſh.*

For the *Athenians*, their Drama firſt appear'd in Form at *Theſpis*, was cultivated by *Æſchylus*, and perfected by *Sophocles*. Now this is extreamly Remarkable that the People, which from *Theſeus* to *Theſpis*, that is for the Space of about ſeven hundred Years, continued a poor ignorant and contemptible People; and in the Space of one hundred Years more, in which Time their Tragedy was form'd by *Theſpis*, cultivated by *Æſchylus*, and perfected by *Sophocles*. It is extreamly Remarkable, that in that ſmall Space of Time, theſe People who were ſo Inconſiderable, came to be ſo illuſtrious for Arts and Arms, renown'd for Eloquence, for Philoſophy famous, and for Empire formidable, the Maſters of *Greece*, the Scourges of *Aſia*, and the Terror of the great King.

In that Space of Time flouriſhed moſt of their mighty Conquerors, *Cimon*, *Ariſtides*, *Pericles*, *Themiſtocles*, and *Miltiades*: Their Tragic Poets were the Perſons who animated their Armies, and fir'd the Souls of thoſe brave Men who conquer'd at once, and Died for their Country in the Bay of *Salamis*, and in the Plains of *Marathon*; at which Place a handful of Men, as it were, of the Deciples of *Theſpis*, and the ſucceeding Poets, vanquiſh'd

the numberleſs Forces of the *Eaſt*, laid the Foundation of the *Grecian* Empire, and of the Fortune of the great *Alexander*.

The *Athenians* were highly ſenſible of the Advantage which the State received from the the Theatre, which they Maintained at a public prodigious Expence, and a Revenue appropriated to that pecular Uſe, and eſtabliſh'd a Law, which made the leaſt attempt to alienate the Fund Capital; ſo that when the common Exchequer was exhauſted, *Demoſthenes* was obliged to uſe the utmoſt Addreſs to induce them to divert or touch this ſeparate Fund.

And as to the *Romans*, *Livius Andronicus*, who was their firſt Dramatic Poet, appear'd in the five hundred and fourteenth Year after the Building of the City; and 'till his Time they had been ſtrugling, as it were for Life with their Neighbours, and were torn by perpetual Convulſions within themſelves; whereas after the firſt Repreſentation of the Plays which were writ by him, they were not only quiet within themſelves, for above a hundred Years after; but in a hundred more, became the Maſters of the Univerſe: And who were the Perſons among them that advanced their Conqueſts, and extented their Empire? The very Men who built their Theatres and who writ their Plays. *Scipio* conquer'd *Spain* and *Africa*, *Lucullus Aſia*, and

Cæſar

Cæſar England, Flanders, France, and *Germany.*

'Tis not above a hundred and fifty Years ſince Dramatic Poetry began to flouriſh in *France,* ſince which Time the *French* have not only been remarkably United, but have advanced their Conqueſts ſo faſt, that they have almoſt doubled their Empire.

Cardinal *Richlieu* was the Perſon, who at the ſame Time laid the Foundation of the greatneſs of their Theatre and their Empire; and 'tis a ſurprizing thing to conſider, that the Spirit of Dramatic Poetry leaving them juſt before the beginning of the late War, by *Moliere* and *Corniellis*'s Death, and by *Racines*'s Age, they have ſince that Time loſt half their Conqueſts.

To come home to Ourſelves: Dramatic Poetry began to be brought into Form with us in the Time of *Henry* VIII. and tho' ſince that Time we cannot boaſt of ſuch glorious Succeſſes as we had in the Times of our *Henry* V. or our *Edward* III. when the conquering Genius of *England* in Triumph ſeem'd to beſtride the Ocean, and to fix an Imperial Foot on the Continent; yet this may be ſaid to the Advantage of the Drama, that ſince it firſt began to be Cultivated, we have had our Eyes open, and found that our Conſtitution is ill deſigned for Conqueſt, and by being very Fortunate, we ſhould run the risk of becoming very Unhappy, and endanger our Liberty by extending our Empire.

F I N I S.

APPENDIX.

SINCE the foregoing Matter was in the Preſs, a new Licenced Dramatick Piece was Acted at the Theatre Royal *Covent-Garden*; this Piece conſiſted of three Comedies, call'd *A Neſt of Plays*, and appear'd all at once with ſo great a Blaze, that one might have as well expected to have ſeen three Moons on one Night; but however, the Fate of them were ſoon determined, for in three Hours they were totally Eclips'd; and the Occaſion of this ſudden Cataſtrophe I ſhould be glad to know, but I believe the Eggs were Addle, or not ſo well Nurs'd as *Harlequin* when he was produc'd from an Egg; and as this Brood has proved an Abortive one, I ſuppoſe the M——r will try the Fate of a Neſt of *Harlequins*; for altho' they are difficult to be hatch'd here, yet enough of them may be Imported from *France*, while the two neſt Eggs are a making.

The ill Succeſs of this former Piece made the Perſons of the other Houſe laugh in their Sleeve, for (ſay they) we'll ſhew them a Curious Piece to Morrow, ſhall excite the Admiration of an Audience, Accordingly the next Night were play'd at the Theatre Royal in *Drury-Lane*, a moſt excellent new Licenced Piece call'd the *Coffee-Houſe*; and altho' Mr. *Cibber* and Mrs. *Clive*, (as the *Iriſhman* ſays) *play'd their own Dear Shelves in Perſon*, and did it to ſo great a Charm that they reſembled the Characters to the niceſt Exactneſs, yet the Audience were ſo diſpleaſed that they would not let them go on this Night, or ſuffer it to be play'd again; which brought the following Saying from a worthy Gentleman, *Arra Faith now dear Honey, is't not a ſhame that a Man can't have the Liberty to perſonate himſelf without Affronting another*: But as this Play is Printed, I muſt refer the Reader to it.